1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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172 WRITING.—The carvings on one of the bowlders at the Kiwras Rapids on Rio Coco are said to resemble somewhat the characters of the Latin alphabet. Wickham (b: 245) heard of some "writing" on rocks of Rio Mico, which he considered—quite erroneously of course—inscriptions in Latin made by the early Jesuit missionaries. Neither Miskito nor Sumu appear to have possessed the art of writing as did their western neighbors, the Nicarao and Chorotega. According to Oviedo the two latter tribes had books of parchment made from deer skins. Picture writing was also practiced, and is still, by the Cuna Indians of Panama, as has recently been ascertained by Nordenskiöld.[29]

RUBBER COLLECTING

●314
439 In former days the Indians used to collect rubber from a wild-growing tree (*Castilla* sp.), which is found nearly all over the country. This industry started about 1860, first on Rio San Juan, and gradually spread to the remainder of the Mosquito Coast. The Indians sold their rubber to the local merchants, who generally made large advances to them. About 1912 and 1913, when the export of rubber ceased, owing to the low price caused by the large production of plantation rubber in the British and Dutch East Indies, many Indians found themselves heavily in debt to the merchants.

314 The rubber collectors or "huleros" first made a rude ladder out of the lianas that hang from the trees; this was done by tying short pieces of wood across them with the aid of smaller lianas. Later iron spurs were introduced and attached to the feet to climb the trees. With the machete they then scored the bark with cuts having the shape of the letter V, the point being downward. Such cuts were made all the way up the trunk, at a distance of about 3 feet from each other; they extended nearly round the tree, but the latter was on no account to be completely girdled. At the bottom of these series of cuts a spout was inserted to conduct the latex juice into buckets or other containers. In about half an hour all the whitish milk had run out of the tree.

Afterwards the latex was strained and caused to coagulate by the addition of an alkaline decoction made from the juice of the ohajmol vine (*Ipomoea bona-nox* L.; M.: *tatako;* T. and P.: *tutuk;* U.: *ulupuy*) or from that of a liana (*Calonyction speciosum*); this was combined with the latex in the proportion of 1 pint to 2 gallons. To prevent putrefaction coagulation must be effected within about 24 hours after the collection of the milk. The resulting mass was then made into round flat cakes, which were exported under the name "sheet rubber"

[29] Picture Writings and Other Documents. Comparative Ethnographical Studies, vol. 7, part 1 (1928) and part 2 (1930).

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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(Spanish "torta" or "plancha"). The milk, adhering to the cuts made into the bark, blackened upon exposure to the sun and air; it was left to coagulate there, and then wrapped up in bundles separate from the other rubber. This was shipped mostly to New York, where it was known as "scrap rubber" or "picket rubber" (Spanish "burucha," the "sernamby" of the Brasilians). In later years the spot at the foot of the rubber tree was cleared and the milky juice was allowed to drop to the ground, taking its own time to coagulate. After a couple of weeks, when it was sufficiently dry, it was rolled up and made into bundles varying from 50 to 200 pounds in weight. This is the "strip rubber" of commerce (Spanish "tira" or "cuera").

When this industry started in 1860 large rubber trees from 4 to 5 feet in diameter were not uncommon. These yielded, when first cut, about 20 gallons of milk, each gallon of which furnished 2 pounds of rubber. After an ordinary bleeding the tree soon recuperates, and may be tapped again the following year. Unscrupulous collectors merely felled the tree in order to facilitate the work. By this pernicious method large trees have been made to yield over a quintal of rubber, but gradually all the big trees were killed and even specimens measuring 3 feet in diameter became rare. Many huleros then adulterated the rubber with the latex derived from the tunu tree; the resulting mixture being less elastic, and consequently of inferior quality, the product from the Mosquito Coast yielded a lower price than that from other regions of Central America.

Previous to 1860 rubber was collected in thick circular cakes, which were used only to make black paint from the melted gum.

MANUFACTURE OF BARK CLOTH

In the northern part of the Mosquito Coast a coarse brownish cloth is pounded from the inner bark of a tree closely related to the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.). The cloth, as the tree itself, is known throughout the country by the Miskito name *tunu*,[31] while the Twahka and Panamaka call the tree *tikus*, and the finished product *amat*.[32] The tree does not grow in the region inhabited by the Ulwa, and these Indians use the bark of the rubber tree (*tas*) for the manufacture of bark cloth, which they call *tas-bâlna* "pounded rubber."

USES OF BARK CLOTH.—Nowadays bark cloth is made almost exclusively into "sheets" or "blankets" for the bed, and into loin cloths (M.: *palpura;* T., P.: *wah-ats;* U.: *ani*). In former days it furnished the clothing for rich and poor, although the gala dress, of men of rank at least, appears to have been of cotton.

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[31] This name is already found by M. W. (207, 208) in the form *tono*.

[32] *Amati* or *guanhomati* is the Mexican name for a species of fig, the bark of which was made into paper and clothing.